

SEASHORE PASPALUM

Paspalum vaginatum Sw.

plant symbol = PAVA

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Alternate Names

None

Uses

Seashore paspalum is used as a forage food for cattle and horses. It is grazed from March to November and the green stolons are eaten during the winter months. It is also used by wild geese for feed.

Paspalum vaginatum is used in commercial and residential landscaping. This plant has been very successful for golf courses all around the world, especially in the coastal states and in other areas near brackish or high saline waters. It is considerably more salt tolerant than other standard golf course turf so it can be irrigated with salt water, which saves an enormous amount of money used in the desalinization of the water used for irrigation. Because seashore paspalum grows low to the ground,

it has a high tolerance for traffic and wear. It grows rapidly which provides a thick turf and competes against weeds when maintained properly.

Paspalum vaginatum has other important uses such as erosion control, wetland restorations, and site reclamation on oil and gas well sites.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description

General: Grass Family (Poaceae). Seashore paspalum is a native, warm season, creeping perennial. Culms are erect, smooth at the nodes and range in heights of 1-7.9 dm. Sheaths are glabrous, overlapping and scantily pubescent apically. Blades range in lengths of 2.5–15 cm and in widths of 3–8 mm, which may be flat or folded inward length wise. Blades are mostly glabrous having a sparse amount of long hairs located on the top surface close to the base. Ligules are 1-2 mm in length. Racemes are usually in numbers of 2-3 and range in lengths of 1.1-7.9 cm. They are erect and spreading at maturity. Axes are winged, smooth, 1-2 mm wide and have scabrous margins. Spikelets are solitary, glabrous, elliptic to ovate-lanceolate, faint-stramineous in color, 3-4.5 mm long and 1.1-2 mm wide. First glume seldom developed, usually absent. The second glume and sterile lemma are 3-nerved with the nerves suppressed. The fertile floret is comose and white in color. The caryopsis is yellow and is approximately 3 mm long.

Distribution

For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation

Seashore paspalum inhabits brackish sand areas and saline areas along the coasts that stretch from North Carolina down to Florida and over to Texas. It is found as far south as Argentina and in the warm regions of the Eastern Hemisphere. It is suited for compacted inorganic marsh soils of average salinity and flourishes when water levels are fluctuated between 2 inches above the surface to 6 inches below the soil surface. However, it can withstand more than 2 inches of water above the soil surface during the winter season.

Establishment

It is propagated asexually using stolons and rhizomes. Since seeds are seldom available, seashore paspalum is available in sprigs, plugs and sod.

For optimum results, plant 3 bushels of sprigs per 1000 square feet during late spring or summer. It prefers a pH above 6.0 and should be mowed after the first 60-90 days after planting.

Management

In managing Seashore paspalum for forage, it is recommended that less than 50% of the present year's production by weight be grazed. In addition, a 90-day suspension of grazing is implemented to improve the strength of the crop and to obtain a forage reserve. Overgrazing is usually not a problem because this forage grows flat on the ground.

In managing Seashore paspalum for landscape or golf courses, a low level of Nitrogen, about 3 to 4 pounds per 1000 square feet per year, is recommended. Fertilizer should be applied during the fall to prevent scalping. Studies have proven that it produces higher shoot densities when mowed at lower heights. This in turn provides a better playing surface and an attractive appearance.

Seashore paspalum is considered invasive to the Hapuna Golf Course in Hawaii where they are using Bermuda grasses. Seashore paspalum is out-competing their established Bermuda turf. They will be conducting a three-year study on how to get seashore paspalum off their course.

Seashore paspalum is vulnerable to insects, such as armyworms and webworms eating and damaging the foliage.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Please check the Vendor Database, expected to be on-line through the PLANTS Web site in 2001 by clicking on Plant Materials. Although seeds are produced several times during the year, they are rarely viable. SALAM and ADALYD (also known as EXCALIBRE) are varieties of seashore paspalum, which are used on golf courses located around the world. SALAM is glossy on the bottom side of the leaf, which allows the courses to be mowed and have a striped appearance.

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